Emergency Access (Knox) Standard

The intent of this guideline is to define South County Fire's Emergency Access Standard and to provide for its use and maintenance.

The Emergency Access Standard is designed to give authorized South County Fire (SCR) personnel access to keys for the protected occupancy whether vacant or occupied. This allows Department personnel to quickly gain access to buildings during an emergency and prevents the damage caused by forcible entry.

SCF requires a key access system for all occupancies in which there is a fire protection system such as: sprinklers, fire alarm, special protection systems, etc., or where access and other conditions are determined to be unduly difficult. This is based on the rationale that rapid and efficient emergency operations will benefit the occupant by reducing property damage.

Knox brand products are the only approved key access system for South County Fire's area of response, including the Cities of Brier, Edmonds, Lynnwood and Mountlake Terrace.
South County Fire's Emergency Access Standard includes Knox key Boxes, Knox padlocks, and Knox key switches. In this procedure the term Knox Box may refer to any of the three types of Knox products listed above.

Emergency Access Requirements: A Knox box shall be provided at the main entrance of buildings with interior common areas. An additional Knox box shall be provided at the exterior entrance to sprinkler riser/fire alarm control panel (FACP) rooms and other locations deemed necessary for building access. Once the Knox boxes are received, it is recommended that the contractor/owner discuss box placement approval with a Deputy Fire Marshal. Typically boxes are located to the right of the main entrance door and/or FACP/Fire riser room door. Boxes will be placed 5-6' above finished grade. Building owners shall provide the following keys depending on the requirements determined for the premises, and may include:
1. Main entrance (or Master)
2. Interior access (if no Master)
3. Fire sprinkler riser room/fire alarm control panel access
4. Electrical, mechanical, and elevator rooms
5. Fire alarm control panel/manual pull stations
6. Electronic/magnetic key cards

On multiple-storied and larger buildings, additional keys may be necessary, for instance, providing roof hatch access or, **sets** of keys anticipated for multiple firefighting crews.

The building Owner/Contractor should contact the Fire Prevention Office to discuss the required Knox box(es) for their building/complex or situation. The Owner/Contractor will use the online ordering system at www.knoxbox.com to order Knox boxes. A more detailed guide for ordering is available from the Fire Prevention Office.

South County Fire's required Knox boxes include the 3200 Series boxes **WITH HINGE**. For facilities requiring a larger number of keys or magnetic cards etc, a 4400 Series box may be required.

GATES ACROSS FIRE DEPARTMENT ACCESS ROADS

Residential - Multi-Family/Private Community Access - Gates across public and private fire apparatus access roads where serving more than two dwellings must meet the following requirements/design:

1.   Must have automatic opening feature activated by Opticom compatible or other approved receivers that override all other opening systems.
2.   Must have an approved Knox key switch which will be located on the entrance side of the gate.
3.   Must have battery back-up or be designed with fail safe mode allowing the gate to be pushed open without the use of special knowledge or equipment or default to the open position.
4.   In private communities where access is existing, any new gates must meet 100% approval from protected property owners.

Residential – 1 and 2 Family Dwelling Access - Gates that obstruct fire apparatus access roads/driveways that serve one or two dwellings and that are electrically operated, shall meet the following requirements/design:

1. Where gates are electric, must have an approved Knox key switch which will be conspicuously located at the entrance side of the gate. Non-electric gates may be accessed using requirements for "Occupancies other than residential" below.
2. Where gates are electric, must have battery back-up or be designed with fail safe mode when primary power is lost, allowing the gate to be pushed open without the use of special knowledge or equipment or default to the open position.
3. Access gates must meet unanimous approval from protected property owners where access is existing.

Occupancies Other Than Residential - Gates that obstruct Fire Department access roads must meet the following requirements/design:

Electrically Operated Gates –
1. The gate control shall be operable by an approved Knox key switch located conspicuously at the entrance side of the gate. In the event of a power failure, the gate shall automatically be transferred to a fail-safe mode allowing the gate to be pushed open without the use of special knowledge or equipment or default to the open position.

2. Must have automatic opening feature activated by Opticom compatible or other approved receivers that override all other opening systems.

3. In all occupancies, where approved, **manually** operated gates and barriers may utilize Knox padlocks. Approval is provided normally where conditions are such that delays in gate opening are not deemed as a priority for access urgency.

4. On new construction, all Knox equipment shall be installed before a Certificate of Occupancy is issued.

5. Building owners shall assure that access equipment is maintained and contact SCF where locks are re-keyed and conditions for emergency access is modified.

FIRE DEPARTMENT CONNECTION (FDC) ACCESS

Locking caps are not required for new or existing construction, but may be required where problems of theft and/or vandalism occur. Contact the Fire Prevention Office for more information.